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JOTTINGS FROM THE OLD JOURNAL OF LITTLETON  
FOWLER.

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION.

DORA FOWLER ARTHUR.

[The authorities consulted are: Redford's "Methodism in Kentucky," McFerrin's "Methodism in Tennessee," Thrall's "Methodism in Texas," and old diaries and letters of the missionary.]

Littleton Fowler was born in Smith county, Tennessee, September 12, 1802. His father was Godfrey Fowler, of a sturdy old English family of Wake county, North Carolina, and his mother was Clara Wright, of an equally respectable family of Tennessee.

In 1806, his parents, with their small family of four boys, moved to Caldwell county, Kentucky, and located near Princeton. Here the old Fowler homestead is still known to this day and generation, as is also known the old Fowler homestead, dating back more than a century, near Wake Forest, North Carolina. The family has claimed Methodist preachers ever since the labors of Wesley and Asbury in America, but lawyers, teachers, writers and artists have divided family honors. Mr. Redford says, in his "Methodism in Kentucky:" "One of the sweetest spirits that ever belonged to the Methodist ministry of the West was Littleton Fowler." The following data are from the same source, and from the missionary's old Kentucky diary:

He began to preach in 1820, but his health, which was never robust, became so impaired that he was left without an appointment for a few years. In 1828, we find him in charge of the Bowling Green church; in 1829, he was the co-laborer at Louisville of H. H. Kavanaugh, who was later bishop. Here his health again failed him, and he was given an easier work, Cynthiana Station, and later Maysville.

At a subsequent date he was transferred to the Tennessee Conference, and stationed at Tuscumbia, Alabama. In 1833, he was made financial agent of La Grange College, Alabama, which office

he filled for four years, traveling over the Southern States in the interest of this foremost Methodist college for the young men of the South. It has been said that he did more for that institution of learning than any other man except its president, Robert Payne, who afterwards became a bishop of the M. E. Church.

Early in 1837, a call was made in the Alabama Conference for volunteers to go as missionaries to the Republic of Texas. A tall, slender, and delicate looking young man of thirty-five years was the first one to volunteer, saying: "Here am I; send me." He was Littleton Fowler. Dr. Martin Ruter, an older minister, and a married man with a large family, then took his stand by the side of the first volunteer. They were immediately joined by Robert Alexander, a hearty frontiersman, who said, "I am both strong and young; let me go."<sup>1</sup>

Thrall says, in his "Methodism in Texas": "In the early annals of Methodism in Texas, the name of Littleton Fowler will be forever conspicuous."

Two older brothers, John H., and Wiley P. Fowler, had emigrated to the Spanish province, Texas, as early as 1816, and had joined a party of Tennessee relatives, George and Travis Wright, on Red River. Wiley P. Fowler soon returned to Kentucky to live a long and honorable life as one among the ablest jurists and judges of that proud State. John H. remained on Red River to serve his adopted country in many ways. In 1838, he represented Red River county as senator in the Texas Congress.

Bradford C. Fowler, another brother, was a Red River county volunteer in the Texas Revolution of 1836. He was a young sergeant in Fannin's command, but he was separated while on detail duty from the main command at the time of Fannin's calamitous surrender, so he escaped the subsequent massacre at Goliad. He went to California in 1849, to seek gold, but he found a grave instead.

Andrew J. Fowler—familiarily known as "Jack Fowler"—followed his missionary brother to Texas, in 1837, to hold many positions of trust during old Republic days and through her early state-

<sup>1</sup>These facts have been related in the family circle by the widow of Littleton Fowler, and by A. J. Fowler, the youngest brother of the Texas missionary, who once contributed the same to the *Texas Christian* (Methodist) *Advocate*.

hood. He served Lamar county as Representative in the lower house of the Texas Congress in 1840-41. When the shadow of the Civil War fell on Texas, the two surviving Fowler brothers, Col. John H., and Judge "Jack" Fowler, were staunch Union men and Henry Clay Whigs; and although the younger one, my father, went to the front as lieutenant colonel of Bass's Texas Regiment of cavalry, he never again adjusted himself to the dominating political conditions of his adopted State.

With this introduction of Littleton Fowler and his brothers, in their early connection with Texas history, I quote the following from the Memoir of Littleton Fowler, written by Hon. Frank B. Sexton, of San Augustine, now an aged and honored lawyer of El Paso, Texas—and published in the Southern Quarterly Review, 1861, with the accompanying explanation by the editor: "The name of Rev. Littleton Fowler was inserted in the programme of the 'Biographical Sketches of Eminent Itinerant Ministers, distinguished for the most part as pioneers of Methodism within the bounds of the M. E. Church, South,' but the sketch of that excellent man did not reach us in time for insertion in that volume. \* \* \* Having been for several years associated with him in the Texas Conference, our acquaintance beginning with the organization of that body in 1840, it affords us great personal gratification to insert this interesting monograph in the Quarterly, though it is not a Review article."

Mr. Sexton says: "My first recollections of the Rev. Littleton Fowler are these of my early boyhood. He was my father's intimate and valued friend. \* \* \* I distinctly remember, when he was one of our family group, that I was often impressed with his great capacity for entertaining and interesting the social circle. He was easy and versatile, oftentimes humorous, and generally instructive, and always received attention without compelling it. When Mr. Fowler came to Texas, 1837, the Republic was then a comparative wilderness. Many of his ministerial appointments were separated by a distance of several days' journey, which often had to be traveled alone and without reference to weather or accommodations of comfort. He had often to sleep on the ground, with no companion but his horse. Frequently it was necessary for him to leave the ordinary roads, or 'Indian trails,' to avoid meeting treacherous Indians.

"His appointments were regularly filled, whether few or many came out to hear him. He was as ready to dispense the Word of Life to two or three gathered together in the wilderness of Texas as he had been to the hundreds in the spacious churches of Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama. He could pray as earnestly for the solitary sinner whom he met by the wayside, as for the Senators assembled in the Congress of the infant Republic.

"In stature, Mr. Fowler was about six feet two inches. Apparently inclined to leanness, his frame was compactly knit. \* \* \* He was straight as an Indian; his forehead was high, expansive, and commanding; his eyes dark, brilliant, and when stirred with emotion, full of fire. \* \* \*

"His intellectual powers were of a very high order. His views of every subject were liberal and comprehensive. Though his early education was defective—simply such as the frontier schools of his day afforded—he compensated that by close and untiring application to study after he was admitted to the ministry. All his life he was an ardent student. His style of speaking, both in the pulpit and in the social circle, was rigidly correct, and I was surprised to learn from his own lips that he had never had the benefits of scholastic training, but his attainments were almost entirely self-acquired.

"I have often heard him commence a sermon in the mildest manner; then, warming to his subject, his fine eye would kindle, and his words would enchain every ear, and his sincerity penetrate every heart. If to be able to instruct, to interest, to hold in breathless silence an entire assembly, be oratory, then Littleton Fowler was an orator." \* \* \*

On the 21st of June, 1838, Mr. Fowler was married to Mrs. J. J. Porter, of Nacogdoches, a lady of great beauty of person and many graces of the heart. She was one of the Lockwood sisters, of Newport, Kentucky, who were noted beauties and belles of Louisville, Frankfort and Cincinnati. They were the daughters of an army officer, and she was born in 1806, at Fort Madison, Louisiana—which was near Baton Rouge—while her father was stationed at that frontier military post. Later, her mother, being widowed, married John Cleve Symmes, author of "Symmes' Theory," which made such a stir in the world about 1825.

I have lately read with eager interest, a letter from Boston, of

date 1825, from Anthony Lockwood, the step-son of the lecturer, Symmes. The letter mentioned tells of the large crowds that greeted Captain Symmes nightly in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and other cities, to hear him lecture on his "Theory of Concentric Spheres," or a hole through the earth, from pole to pole.<sup>1</sup>

Miss Missouri Lockwood married Dr. J. J. Porter, in Newport, Kentucky, and came with him to Texas to make their fortune, in 1835. He became a merchant at the old mission village of Nacogdoches, but he soon met an early and shocking death. A large bear had been captured and chained to a tree near the old stone fort. Late at night, Dr. Porter was returning home, when all others were asleep, when he walked into the arms of the powerful beast, and was killed before his cries could bring help. His wife, who had accompanied him to Texas to seek riches, remained, to subsequently marry a missionary, and share with him his many and varied labors, becoming herself the first Protestant woman missionary of Texas.

For years she was his constant companion, traveling on horseback over Indian trails to minister to sick and dying emigrants and settlers, or to help bury the dead. Many a time she fashioned a simple shroud of a sheet, or a curtain, by the light of tallow dip, while her husband helped to nail together a rude coffin for some pioneer who had died in Texas' wilds, far from home and kindred.

This remarkable woman, the exponent of all that was good, beautiful, and true, of native refinement and great culture, possessing rare piety and broad Christian humanity, lived out her life of rich deeds well beloved throughout all East Texas as "Aunt," or "Mother" Woolam, the wife of the venerable Methodist preacher, John C. Woolam. She survived her missionary husband nearly half of a century. Her memory is cherished as something beautiful and precious by all her descendants and kindred. Truly, it was a privilege to know her.

The foregoing facts may seem to be too much of a personal nature, but they belong to a sketch of the missionary and to Texas history; old letters and journals, which establish every proof, are in possession of the author of this sketch.

Quotations from the journals of the missionary are now begun on his departure from Alabama for the mission field of Texas:

<sup>1</sup>Published at Cincinnati, 1826.

"Tuscumbia, Ala., August 22, 1837. This day I start for the Republic of Texas, there to labour as a missionary. I have recently been appointed to this work by the Board of Foreign Missions at New York. The impression on my heart and the call to go as a missionary to Texas were as strong and as loud as was my call to the ministry; consequently I go fully expecting the presence and blessings of God. While viewing the labours and privations that await me, my soul is unmoved. Rather do I rejoice that I am accounted worthy to labour and suffer for my blessed Lord; yet the fact of leaving my country, my kindred, my friends, and brethren, fills me with deep sorrow and touching affliction. Rev. Dr. Martin Ruter and Rev. Robert Alexander are to be my co-labourers in the mission field of Texas. \* \* \*

"In Arkansas I engaged John B. Denton, a local preacher, to accompany me to Texas to work in the missionary field. \* \* \* We held a camp-meeting near Clarksville, Red River county, near the first of October. From Clarksville, in the protecting company of three others, we two, with provisions for four days packed on our horses, struck out across Texas for Nacogdoches. We slept in the forest four nights, and arrived at Nacogdoches on October 16, 1837, and preached two sermons. On our way thither we passed the unburied body of a man who had been shot six weeks previously for horse stealing.

"October 19th we reached San Augustine and preached four nights in succession. There I began a subscription for building a church. In less time than two weeks a lot was deeded, \$3500 were subscribed, trustees were appointed, and the building was under written contract to be finished before the first of next September. 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.'"

This was certainly the church, the laying of the corner-stone of which is written of in an isolated part of the missionary's Kentucky journal. It has often been written that Littleton Fowler set up the first Protestant church in Texas. However that may be, here is quoted the isolated entry mentioned:

"San Augustine, Republic of Texas, January 17, 1837." (The figure seven is evidently wrong, a slip of the pen, and should be eight.) "To-day the corner-stone of a Methodist Episcopal Church was laid at this place, according to the usages of the Masonic Order. Between forty and fifty Masons were present, and from five to

eight hundred people, about one hundred of whom were ladies. Two speeches were delivered, the first by myself, and the second by Gen. T. J. Rusk, in his clear and convincing style. The event was one of moral grandeur. This corner-stone is the first one of a Protestant Church west of the Sabine River. \* \* \* This is only the beginning, the first step of Protestantism that will some day march a grand army to the confines of the Republic of Texas."

During the session of the East Texas Conference, held in Palestine last December (1897), the old bell from this church was presented, as an historic relic, to that Conference, by Mr. Columbus Cartwright, of San Augustine. The son of the missionary, Presiding Elder Littleton Morris Fowler, and a grandson, Ellis Smith, preacher in charge of Jefferson Station, were requested to convey the bell to the altar, and there ring out its old voice in memory of early Methodism in Texas.

The presentation speech was made by Presiding Elder Thomas J. Smith. The son of the missionary was requested to give the speaker historic data relating to the old bell, but he deferred to the author of this sketch. A few days later, great was my amazement to see the bell presentation written up in the Galveston News, with the startling assertion that this old bell was first rung on the day of the laying of the corner-stone. I met the News correspondent a few hours later, and I told him I was "so glad to learn when the old bell of the first Methodist Church in Texas was rung for the first time." All the light I had on the subject was a letter from Judge W. P. Fowler, of Kentucky—about 1840—saying that the First Methodist Church of Louisville, which the missionary had served as pastor, would send him its first bell for his first Texas church. The News correspondent replied that nobody said when it was rung for the first time in Texas, so he "fixed it up that way." Thus is much of our history writ.

Again, quotations from the old journal are resumed:

"On the night of the 14th, November, 1837, I preached in a school house in Washington-on-the-Brazos, to a crowded assembly, with many people standing before the door. Here Mr. Gay gave two lots, 100x120 feet, for a Methodist church. The Baptists have the frame of a church already up here.

"From Washington I traveled (on horseback) to the capital city of Houston. I arrived Sunday morning, November 19th, and



preached in the afternoon to a very large assembly. \* \* \* Here I find much vice, gaming, drunkenness, and profanity the commonest. The town is ten months old, and has 800 inhabitants; also many stores, and any number of *doggeries*." Note the old-time Texan word.

"November 21st. To-day the Senate of the Texas Congress elected me Chaplain, to serve the rest of the session. It is my prayer that this act of the Upper House may prove an open door for the entrance of the Gospel into the new Republic. I pray that God will give me grace, keep me humble, and make me faithful in the discharge of my religious duties.

"Nov. 24th. To-day I have been listening to the trial of S. Rhoads Fisher, Secretary of the Texas Navy, in the Senate Chamber. He stands impeached by President Houston. Gray and Kaufman are the counsel for the prosecution. Ex-President Burnet and General Rusk for the defense. Gray opened the trial by the reading of documents for two hours and one-half. He was followed by Burnet at some length and with much bitterness towards the Chief Executive; his speech disclosed a burning hatred for the President. Rusk spoke in a manly style, that was clear, forcible, and full of common sense—the best kind of earthly knowledge.

"Nov. 25th. The trial of Mr. Fisher was continued to-day by Mr. John Wharton, in a most furious tirade against President Houston; it was the bitterest invective I ever heard uttered by man. He was followed by Mr. Kaufman, who was quite respectful to Mr. Fisher; his whole speech was fair and well taken.

"Nov. 26th. I preached morning and night in the *capitol*, to large and respectful assemblies. \* \* \*

"Nov. 27th. Steamboat arrived to-day with 103 passengers from the United States. \* \* \*

"Nov. 28th. The Senate is in secret session on the case of Fisher. \* \* \* I gave one dollar for one-half pound of bacon for a poor, sick, and hungry man." \* \* \*

Here occurs a break in the record, caused by the serious illness of the recorder. After two weeks, the journal resumes:

"Dec. 12th. Many have been my temptations since coming here, but, thank God, they have been overcome. I have lived near to God by prayer, preaching, visiting the sick and dying, and burying the dead. \* \* \*

"Dec. 19th. Congress adjourned to-day.

"Dec. 21st. This morning I leave for San Augustine. I have obtained a deed to a lot in Houston for a house of public worship. It is situated near the capitol, and is 125 feet long and 250 feet wide."

Thrall's "Methodism in Texas" says: "During the time he—L. F.—was in Houston, he received from the Messrs. Allen, a title to half a block of ground, upon which the church and the parsonage in that city now stand."—1872.

His journal tells also of his negotiations for church lots, and the erection of church buildings in Nacogdoches and Marshall, in addition to the churches of San Augustine, New Washington, Houston, and other places.

As the records between are of church work alone, entries made at Houston during the spring session of Congress, are again resumed:

"April 5, 1838. I left Nacogdoches in company of Generals Rusk and Douglass, and Drs. Rowlett and Richardson, for Houston, where we arrived on the 12th, after six days of travel over good roads in fair weather. We found Houston much improved and improving. There is much building and a great increase in population. The Senate had organized when I arrived, and the Rev. Mr. William Y. Allen, a Presbyterian minister, had been appointed Chaplain *pro tem*. He impresses me as a man of piety. Rev. Mr. Newell was invited by the Speaker to so serve the House. Mr. N. is an Episcopal minister, who is said to be engaged in writing a history of Texas."

In a private letter, dated April 21st, Mr. Fowler speaks more freely of the chaplaincy, as follows: "Two days ago there was held an election in the House for Chaplain. The result showed one blank, four votes for Mr. Newell, fourteen for Mr. Allen, and seven by way of burlesque for an apostate Catholic priest of San Antonio. Had they so handled the sacred office in the Senate, they could have done their own praying so far as I was concerned, for I would not have served them."

"Sunday, April 14th. I preached morning and afternoon in the Capitol, Mr. Allen at night. There were large gatherings at all three services.

"April 16th. To-night I attended the assembly of the Grand Lodge in the Senate Chamber. There were about forty (40) members present, and much decorum was observed by the fraternity."

Here is quoted a paragraph from the memoir by Mr. Sexton:

"Mr. Fowler was a zealous and active member of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Free and Accepted Masons. Here, as elsewhere, he merited and received the confidence and attachment of his brethren. He was the first Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Texas, and was present at its organization. The records of the Grand Lodge still exhibit his name as one of its original members."

"April 23rd. I was invited to dine with President Houston, but declined on account of indisposition and for other reasons. He had about a dozen friends attendant on his hospitality."

Again the private letter of date 21st April is quoted from: "To-day is the second anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto, and a fine time for 'Big Bugs' to get drunk without reproach. Happy am I to say that my friend and brother, General Rusk, is much reformed. Last night a splendid ball was given at the hotel. About fifty ladies, and two hundred or three hundred *gentlemen* were in attendance. I enclose a ball invitation which may afford you some amusement to see how such things are done in the Capital of the Republic. Please do not infer from this that I am partial to such assemblies."

One more incident copied from his journal, and a letter dated May 14th. "So soon as I recovered from my serious illness I took a trip to Galveston Island with the President and the members of Congress, and saw *great* men in *high* life. If what I saw and heard were a fair representation, may God keep me from such scenes in future. \* \* \* The island is destitute of timber, but seems to be quite healthy. We were most hospitably entertained. It is destined to be the chief point of commercial importance, perhaps the chief city of Texas. On our return on Sunday afternoon, about one-half on board got mildly drunk and stripped themselves to their linen and pantaloons. Their Bacchanalian revels and blood-curdling profanity made the pleasure boat a floating hell. The excursion to me was one of pain and not pleasure. I relapsed from this trip and was brought near to the valley of death."

After the marriage of Mr. Fowler that spring, 1838, he continued to reside in Nacogdoches and San Augustine for several

years. Later he placed his family, consisting of his wife, two children, Mary and Littleton, and his stepson, Symmes Porter, on his farm in Sabine county. For their protection during his many and prolonged absences, he engaged an illiterate but aspiring and worthy young man, John C. Woolam, promising Mr. Woolam a home and an education in return. He was the same friend to whose keeping Mr. Fowler gave his family when he was dying. So worthy of the trust confided to him did Mr. Woolam prove, that he became, in the course of time, a husband to the widow and a father to the orphans of the distinguished preacher, whose memory he never ceased to revere "e'en down to old age." Father Woolam was a noble man.

Mr. Fowler held responsible positions in his church till his death. After the death of Dr. Ruter in the spring of 1838, Mr. Fowler succeeded him as Superintendent of the Texas Mission till the organization of the Texas Conference in 1840. He was then made presiding elder of the East Texas district, which embraces Texas territory between Red River and the Gulf of Mexico and the Sabine and Trinity rivers.

For nine years Mr. Fowler represented the Texas work in the general conferences of the United States. So stirring were his appeals at those assemblies for co-laborers in Texas, that many young men responded to the call, and came out in small companies, to die of Texas malaria while preaching the Word of God to the Texas pioneers.

Mr. Fowler was co-delegate with a Mr. Clark, of Austin, to the General Conference, held in Philadelphia in 1844, memorable for the division of the Methodist Church into North and South. Mr. Clark took his stand with the Abolition party, while Mr. Fowler voted with the Southern delegation. His letters to his wife during that troubled session show great anguish of spirit, for he sadly deplored the wrathful separation.

He, with his beloved co-worker, Robert Alexander, was the moving spirit in the founding of Rutgersville College, 1838, in memory of the great and lamented Dr. Ruter. He founded Wesley College, at San Augustine, 1842, and made his brother, Jack Fowler, professor of mathematics and ancient languages in that institution. Fowler Institute, of Henderson, Rusk county, 1851, was so named

in memory of Littleton Fowler, and many men of middle life to-day got their education at that East Texas school.

Littleton Fowler died at his home in Sabine county, January 19, 1846, at the comparatively early age of forty-four years. This soldier of the cross is fifty years dead and forgotten by his beloved Texas, but his reward is where noble deeds are never forgotten. His bones lie under the pulpit of McMahan Chapel, which stands in a sequestered spot twelve miles east of San Augustine, in Sabine county. There was where he organized his first Methodist "society" in Texas. Another building has taken the place of the old log church of his burial, but his grave has been undisturbed this half century. A marble slab against the wall bears this inscription:

"Sacred to the Memory of Rev. Littleton Fowler, Methodist Missionary to the Republic of Texas; Kentucky was his beloved State; Texas his adopted country; Heaven is his eternal Home."

With one more quotation—this time from Mr. Thrall, who knew the missionary personally—this sketch closes: "In forming an estimate of the character of Littleton Fowler, the first thing that strikes one is his perfect symmetry. His fine physical form furnished a fitting tenement for his noble mental traits. In his manner, dignity and affability were beautifully blended. He had a most benevolent expression of countenance, a keen, piercing eye, and a musical, ringing voice. His mind was well cultivated; his religious experience was cheerful; his convictions of the truth and the power of the gospel were remarkably strong. He was the very man for Texas, and when he died, Texas Methodism went in mourning. He was buried under the pulpit of his home church, where he had so often stood as a Christian ambassador."